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1687
The Duty of Reformation:

Set forth in a

S E R M O N,

Preached at

St. JAMES's,

In the Chappel of His late
Royal Highness, Prince
GEORGE of Denmark;

27th October the
On the XIX Sunday after Trinity, 1717.

On Occasion of the JUBILEE, kept
about this Time by some Protestant
Churches, in Remembrance of the Re-
formation begun Two Hundred Years ago.

R.
By ANTHONY WILLIAM BOEHM,
Chaplain to His late Royal Highness.

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The Day of Reformation:

SERMON.

Preached at

St. James's



In the Chapel of the
Royal Household, Windsor,
GEORGE OF DENMARK;

On the 22nd September 1701.

By WILLIAM BURNET,
Bishop of Salisbury, and
one of the Secretaries of State.
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Revelat. XVIII. 4.

And I heard another Voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, my People, that ye be not Partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues.

THAT the true Church is frequently compared to *Jerusalem*, and the false Church to *Babylon*, doth abundantly appear from the Prophetical Writings of the *Old* and *New Testament*. As we ought to approach the former, in order to be incorporated into that Heavenly Society; so we ought to depart from the latter, and by a constant Remove, leave it at last entirely behind us.

What is here represented to us under the Denomination of the City of *Babylon*, whence we ought to remove; and under that of *Jerusalem*, which we ought to approach; is by plainer Scriptures inculcated by the Words of *Conversion*, *Regeneration*, *Reformation*, and other Terms of that Nature. *Reformation* is in a figurative Expression nothing else but a *Departure* from *Babylon*, and from all her Errors and Vices; and a constant Approach to *Jerusalem*, and to all her Graces and Virtues.

It is now *Two Hundred Years* ago, when God, in his infinite Mercy, was pleased to begin the blessed Work of *Reformation* from a Church, which, by a Succession of many Ages, had contracted a Power of spiritual Diseases, and infected those

those that came too near her. Those that were ~~saved therein, were saved as by Fire;~~ and such as were preserved in so general an Inundation of Errors, were like a drowning Man, who catches at the Rope, when he is overwhelmed by the Sea. Many Efforts indeed were made, even before Luther and his Fellow-Labourers appeared in this Work : But the Design broke off in its Infancy, and did not come to any Settlement till such Time as was appointed by Providence. Nothing could now any longer withstand the Power of that Arm which was stretched forth for reforming the Church, then languishing under many spiritual Distempers. All the Dams, Walls, and strong Holds, which the Art of Man had cast up for a Defence of *Babylon*, began to be shaken, and a Way made to remove from her; as several Nations have done ever since. This is what we are to remember in a particular Manner on this Day, and by exhorting one another, answer the Reformation with a suitable Life and Conduct. This will undoubtedly prove the most acceptable Jubilee unto the Lord, and a Means both to preserve and improve so considerable a Blessing we have conferred upon us. I shall therefore endeavour to propose to you,

- I. *The State of the Church before the Reformation.*
- II. *The Reformation it self, and the Improvement we ought to make of it.*

First then, Give me Leave to lay before you some Hints of the Corruption of that Church, from which our Reformers did think fit to depart Two Hundred Years ago. The Text says: *Come out of her, my People.* This XVIIIth Chapter doth exactly cohere with the preceeding XVIIth, wherein the final Judgment of the Whore, the Mother

The Duty of Reformation.

§.

Mother of all Abominations, is most solemnly proclaimed. The Thread of this graphical Description is continued in this Chapter. The Clouds which were gathering over her Head are now ready to pour Fire and Brimstone upon her, and to lay that Glory in the Dust, which did strike Wonder into the Nations. The Lord had first spoke by *Threatnings*; but these being slighted, he speaks now by *Executions*; and the Rod being, after many preceeding Warnings, at last lifted up, cannot now be restrained from executing for what it is sent.

But lo! In the Midst of Judgments the Lord remembers Mercy; I say Mercy, to those that are *His People*. The same God, who preserved *Noah* from a destroying Flood, and *Lot* from a fiery Rain, doth now, by a powerful Call, secure his People from that Desolation, which was to consume the Wicked. All his Judgments are interwoven with many Intervals of Mercy, that under such a Reprieve the Sinner may repent and return: But when the Riches of Mercy have been despised long enough, and Sin doth now reach up unto Heaven, 'tis then that the Day of Wrath succeeds, and his Anger breaks forth into a Flame, which no Man can restrain. God is then both *just* and *powerful* in inflicting his Judgments. And when he inflicts them, he lets the Sinner see it is nothing but what he deserveth. This perhaps is intimated by the Angel coming down from Heaven, and having both a great *Power*, and a great *Light*, so that the *Earth was lighted with his Glory*, and the Darkness of *Babylon* set in so great a Light, as to hasten the Departure of God's People, that as yet remained in her.

But I will mention now a few Particulars, wherein the Corruption of *Rome* doth more evidently

dently appear, and which moved the first Reformers to depart from her. A *dead Formality* in Matters of Church and Religion is certainly one of the most dangerous Diseases of the Church of *Rome*, called in my Text *Babylon the great*. By a *dead Formality*, I understand nothing else than a bare outward Form of Godliness, which Men are wont to assume to themselves, tho' they be destitute at the same Time of an inward Principle of Grace, and of the very Desire after it. I say a *bare outward Form* : For there must be a *Form*, as well as a *Power* of Godliness ; and if the *Power* of Religion be lodged within, it will also display it self in an external *Form*, and in such a *Form* too as is both edifying to him that hath it, and to those that see it. The Apostle himself, when he draws up the Character of the latter Times, ranks those that have a *Form of Godliness* among the Corrupters of those Days : But then he doth not speak of any *Form* in general, but of that only, whereby the *Power* is *denied*.

This dead Form, if a Man doth not guard against it, diffuseth it self through all the Actions and Performances of his Life. Thus a Man may have a *Form* of Praying, without the *Power* ; a *Form* of publick and private Worship, without the *Power* ; a *Form* of Mortification, without the *Power* ; a *Form* of Charity, without the *Power* ; a *Form* of Humility, without the *Power* ; and a *Form* of Faith it self, without any *Power* attending it at all. Truly, if there be any Disease in the Church of *Rome*, whereby the very Heart of Religion is infected, and its Vigour and Soundness seized, it must be this empty Appearance of such Things as have no Root or *vital* Principle within. But this *Heartless* Piece of Worship is still render'd more dangerous, when a Man assumes to himself the Air of teaching others religious

ligious Duties, when he hath nothing thereof himself, but the bare Form and Outside. 'Tis then that most perilous Symptoms arise from this Form of Religion. There springs up from it *Self-Complacency*, a *Pharisaical Disdain of others*, and the like spiritual Pollutions. The Apostle enumerates some himself, when he reproveth the *Pharisees* of old, who raising a great Blaze of a formal Profession, were exact in some Things, even to a Sort of Severity: (*Acts xxvi. 5.*) Behold, says he, *thou art called a Jew*, (a Confessor) and art thereby distinguished from those that are without the Pale of the Church; whom thou takest to be a Cast-away, and altogether removed from the ancient Church-Constitution set up by God himself. Thou *restest in the Law*: Thou art in Possession of the Oracles of God, and of all which God hath deliver'd by *Moses*; and *makest thy Boast of God*, not of a false Deity, or of some heathenish Idol, but of the true living God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who hath manifested himself to *Abraham* and the Fathers. It was He of whom the Jew did make his Boast, and it was He to whom by a peculiar federal Act he was allied. Thou *knowest his Will*, relating to the Seed of the Woman promised to *Adam*, and appointed to bruise the Serpent's Head, and which was renewed in the succeeding Ages to the Fathers. Thou *approvest* (discernest) *the Things that are more excellent*, according to the Light of the Law, out of which thou art instructed. Thou art *confident*, that *thou thy self art a Guide to the Blind*. A dangerous Symptom indeed, when a Man comes to be *confident* of his own Parts and Abilities! And yet to guide others, is an Enterprize laudable enough, provided a Man hath first experienced himself what he is to teach others.

All this, and a great deal more set down by the Apostle, is comprehended under the Name of a *Form of Godliness*; and yet are all those Things which the natural Man converts into an empty Form, good in themselves, and even conducive for helping to sustain the Power of Religion, if they be but improved to that End. To be within the Pale of the *true Church*, where the Means of Salvation are displayed, is a signal Advantage; but to *acquiesce* in the external Means, without improving them to an inward Holiness of Life, will render the Means ineffectual, and turn the Use thereof into a dead Formality. To be in *Possession of the Law*, but not to come by it to the *Knowledge of Sin*, (Rom. III. 20.) and at last to Christ himself, is an unseasonable *Rest*, and will prove but a lifeless Form at last. To make one's *Boast* of the true God, and yet at the same Time to harbour an Idol within, is but a vain Boast, and naked Profession. To *know the Will of God*, and not do it, doth but increase our Judgment in the Day of Wrath. To *approve* the more *excellent Things*, and yet set the Affection on those that are base and earthly, is but a cold Approbation and a useless Piece of Vanity.

Thus we see how Things good in themselves are converted into a bare Form of Godliness, and how the very Laws and Ordinances of God are made a mere Shew and Pageantry. Men will *rest* in the outward Possession of them, they will *confide* in them, and make their *Boast* of them; as the *Jews* did of old, when they busied themselves about the Institutions of God, but neglected their *spiritual Power*, which should have regenerated their Heart, sanctified their Will, enlightened their Understanding, and rendered their whole Life and Conversation conformable to the Will of God.

You

You know, my Beloved, how much the Church of Rome is guilty of such empty Formalities. They have not only turned too much of the Worship of God into a bare Form, but superadded a Load of human Traditions, and burdened therewith the Consciences of Men to a high Degree. Things that were not required at their Hands! They brought in so many Indulgences, so many Pilgrimages, so many Saints, so many Images, and in a Word, so many Saviours, that *CHRIST*, the only Redeemer of Mankind, was almost lost in that Croud, and the healing Influence of his Merits too much neglected. This was attended with Abundance of erroneous Doctrines, which like a Flood broke in upon the Church, so that but a few Articles escaped the common Stain, which then seized upon the System of the Christian Faith. The Article of our *Justification* through Christ, is the very Inlet into all the Favours of God. Hereby the Enmity is taken away, and a Peace established that passeth Understanding. Hereby the Soul is entitled to all the Privileges of the Gospel, and adopted into the Family of God. But how this Article hath been mangled in the Church of Rome, is but too well known to those that are acquainted with her Doctrine.

This was followed by another most dangerous Engine. As this Church is called *Babylon the great*, so she shewed her Greatness not only in an external *Pomp* and Splendor, but, what was far worse, in an unchristian *Dominion over the Consciences of Men*. Religion was erected into a Sort of *Monopoly*, and the Clergy ingrossed Gospel and Law into their own Hands. The Laity durst not look within the Veil, or presume to dive into that artful Contrivance, whereby the interior Springs of Church and Religion were made to move. They were fain to take up in

a *second-hand* Belief, and receive upon Trust what the holy Church (the Clergy) thought fit to impart them. Thus had they little to trust to but a blind and unreserv'd Obedience, and this in Things too of the highest Concern and Importance. What Bands and Confinements, what Prisons and Limits, were these Things to a Soul that wanted to *hear Christ himself* in his Word, and experimentally know, *that he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World?* What could this leave upon the Mind, but a Huddle of *humane* Convictions, a Load of raw and undigested Notions, attended with a cumbersome Train of uncertain, dubious, and groundless Traditions, which, upon Occasion, could be lessened or multiplied, as the Clergy did think fit? The sacred Scripture, you know, is the common Treasury of heavenly Truths; but then none but the Clergy, and perhaps a few whom they imparted that Privilege, had Liberty to read it: And when they read it, they were obliged to read nothing in it, but what was consonant to the common Set of Opinions received in the Church. Thus was the Interpretation of the Scripture set above the Scripture it self, and the sacred Text was fain to stoop to the Comments of frail and fallible Men.

All these *humane* Ways could beget nothing but a *humane* Faith. The Son did believe what the Father had taught him; and the Father had conveyed it to him from his Ancestors, and those had originally drawn it (not from the Spirit and Word of Christ, the productive Principle of Faith, but) from the Church, who handed it down from one Generation to another. Into the holy Church (the Clergy) is every Thing resolved at last, as the grand and fundamental Principle whercon the Laity must raise their Belief. All which Things
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are certainly very destructive to the *essential* and *experimental* Part of Religion, and seizing thus upon the very Vitals of the Christian Faith, we may fitly apply to that Church the woful Description given by the Prophet, of the corrupt Government of Judah: *There is no Soundness in it; but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores: They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with Ointment.*

But perhaps you'll say, that the Doctrine of *good Works* is more inculcated in that Church, than in any other besides. That there is a Number of religious Houses and Orders, together with many Rules and Maxims, Laws and Methods, contrived for the Regulation thereof. Again; That hereby Men are removed from the Snares of the World, and entirely dedicated to the Service of God. Now 'tis certain these Things have ever made a Noise in the World, and bore a great Weight with those that don't enquire into the *intrinsic* Value of Things: But a great Noise about Church and Religion is not always a sure Mark of a good Church; nay, it often proves a Sign of a very light Constitution. The greater a Church is, the greater is generally the Noise which is made about it; and the nearer a Church approaches to her primitive Worth and Soundness, the less she stands in need of Noise and Clamour to set forth her Excellency.

And what doth particularly concern the religious *Orders* and Institutions wherewith the Church of *Rome* abounds, we had best enquire whether all these Establishments be agreeable to the Gospel, and absolutely necessary for the Practice of an unfeigned Religion. Faith in Christ, which is the Basis of a Christian Life, is not confined to Cloisters and Orders of Men. It is of a divine Extraction, and not raised at all

on humane Laws and Constitutions. It doth not so much remove the Body from conversing with the World, as it doth the Soul from loving it. It doth not shut up the Light in Corners and Cloysters, but lets it shine *BEFORE Men*, that they may see such good Works, and glorify the Father which is in Heaven. A Soul endued with the Life of Faith, shines as a Light in the World; and she keeps her self blameless in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation. And doth not from all this appear, what Life and Energy, what Power and Virtue, a divine Faith carrieth with it? Even that Power, whereby a Man will pass unhurt through an infectious World, and triumph over all the subtil and violent Attempts of the common Enemy of Souls. Thus is Faith in Christ of an extensive Nature, and in this consists its Worth and Dignity. It halloweth all the States and Conditions of Life. It shuts none out from its Sway and Influence, but maketh every Man, and every Man's Profession, subservient to the main End wherein our Lives and Actions ought to meet, and which is nothing else but that the Creator may be glorified again in the Creature.

This Faith, as it doth proceed from God, so it leads up the Soul to him, and keeps up a sweet Intercourse between both. It stands in no need of so great a Number of Laws and Constitutions, of Orders and Canons of Men. For it teacheth a Man to walk according to the *Rule of the new Creature*, (Gal. VI. 15, 16.) which, like a divine Vein, doth not so much compel him from without, as animate him from within, to a faithful Discharge of his Trust. Faith will teach a Man to keep a just Medium betwixt Retiredness and Conversation, though there were no Monasteries to confine him to. For after all, the
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Cloystering up of the Body will produce no great Effect, whilst the Will and Affections be at the same Time permitted to rove after forbidden Objects. There is a religious Conversation, as well as a religious Retiredness; and if both be seasonably used, they will correct each other, and improve all Christian Graces into a greater Perfection. A studious Observer of the Motions of his own Heart, will use both in divine Soberness and Discretion, and learn how much to live in publick, and how much in private. And this inward Sense will make him avoid Extremities on both Sides, and keep him from any slavish Confinement, either to too much Privacy, or too much Popularity.

Now whatever a Man draws from his own Stock, and from the daily Observations he maketh upon his internal and external Life, is far more excellent than what humane Laws and Precepts impose upon him. Not to mention at present, how many *good Works*, so called, are practis'd in Popery, which have no other Foundation than Man's own Will and Pleasure. Nay, such Works are often preferred before those as are commanded by God himself, and do proceed from the gracious Operation of his Spirit. Thus hath the Doctrine of *Faith*, the radical Principle of Christianity, been darkened in the Church of *Rome*, and the Authority of Men erected instead thereof. And as all these Errors must needs prove very destructive to the Power of Religion, so we have Reason to thank the Lord, that the *Protestant Churches* have begun to remove from them. But this will fuller appear from the *Second Particular* I am now to propose, and which is the *Reformation* it self, and the *Improvement* we ought to make of it.

The first Reformation was set on Foot *Two Hundred Years* ago, when *Luther*, and others with him, began to see the Corruption of that Church, and to come out of her. It was then that *Babylon the great* was shaken, and lost many of her Inhabitants, who seeing the Danger hanging over her, hasten'd away, and guarded against her Jurisdiction. It is plain from the Revelation, that *Babylon* is to be visited by a *Twofold Fall*; one whereof is mentioned, Chap. xiv. 8. *Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great City*; which Fall, how dreadful soever it is, cannot be the last or final Destruction spoken of in my Text. For by this, all her Glory shall be for ever laid in the Dust. She shall thereby be irrecoverably lost, and for ever undone to all Intents and Purposes. And this last and terrible Overthrow is set forth in the *xviiith* Chapter. It will be a Fall attended with most woful Consequences, both in relation to her self, and to all those that have committed *Fornication with her*.

It is from this City, from this *Babylon*, we have begun to depart at the Time of the Reformation. Not as if we were now gone far enough in so important a Work; but that we should go farther every Day, and not give over till Things be brought back to their former Perfection. 'Tis true, the *Protestant Churches* do not properly fall under the Denomination of *Babylon*; for this Name is confined to the Church of *Rome* only, and those that strictly adhere to her: But then it is no less true, that a vast Deal of *Babylon's Trade* is left among *Protestants*, which, by a continued Reformation, ought to be done away, that the Church may recover at last her primitive Lustre and Beauty. This is the *Improvement* we ought to make of the Reformation, and this is the uninterrupted *Progress* through which we should remove farther

farther from *Babylon*. Come out of her, my People, fully, entirely, not some, but all. Those that are come away, are to come away yet farther; and those that hitherto have been preserved in it, must now quit it, if ever they will escape the impending Judgment. There is a *spiritual* and a *bodily* Departure. By the *spiritual* Removal, we understand a forsaking of all the Corruptions, Errors, Vices, Delusions and Superstitions which abound in that Church. And 'tis this that doth chiefly concern us at present, and which beareth the greatest Weight in this Affair. I say, a forsaking of all the Corruptions, not of one or other only; a forsaking not only of the Errors of the *Understanding*, but also of the Vices of the *Will* and *Affections*.

It is a vulgar Mistake, when People understand by the Corruption of *Rome*, some *doctrinal* Errors only, and think themselves reformed enough after they have taken up a purer and more scriptural Doctrine. I appeal to your own Judgment and the Impression you receive on your Mind, when you hear or read Discourses of the Corruption of that Church; whether *Transubstantiation*, *Purgatory*, and the like *intellectual* Errors, do not immediately occur to your Thoughts, as if they were the very Heart and Essence of *Popery*? But how can we rationally suppose, that the Corruptions of *Popery* do chiefly float in the Understanding, whilst there is so long an Account of the Sins of *Babylon* given in this Chapter, and of such Sins too, as do most naturally seize upon the *Will*? The City it self is called the *Habitation of Demons*, the *Hold of every foul Spirit*, the *Cage of every unclean and hateful Bird*. And as she harbours so fulsome a Brood of Lusts, we cannot possibly suppose she stocks all this Evil within the Memory, without deriving any Infection on the *Will* of Men: Besides this, she diffuseth her
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rank Poison far and near, and makes *all Nations drink of the Wine of her Fornication*. She driveth a constant Trade with the Stock of Evil lodged within, and renders thereby her Guilt more large and diffusive.

Let us but survey the Life which is led within the Walls of this City, and we shall find it represented in most black and odious Colours. This Consideration will give us sound Ideas of the grand Work of Reformation, as it relateth both to the *Will* and *Understanding*. There is Abundance of Riches and Delicacies in her; there is Power and Greatness; there are Sins reaching up unto Heaven; there is a State of carnal Security free from Care and Sorrow; there is Plenty of Things to satisfy the Desires of a *lustful* Soul; Things dainty and goodly, costly and precious. And what is worse than all, *Babylon glorifieth* her self in all this, and boasts of that Pride and Vanity which she should subdue and mortify. And doth not all this Heap of Iniquity chiefly affect the *Will* and *Affections*? Here the sensual Appetite taketh its Length, and every carnal Desire is satisfied to the full. To sum up the whole in a Word: *Pride*, or *Vain-Glory*, *Lust*, and *carnal Security* are the very leading Sins of *Babylon*, to which all other Errors are but Handmaids to attend upon them, or by one false Doctrine or other to colour over their Ugliness. Thus is the Error of *Purgatory*, of *Indulgences*, of *Masses* for Souls departed, kept up for no other Reason, but because they are gainful, and the Product thereof helps to maintain *Babylon* in her Lust and Greatness. The very Seed whence Popery sprung, is *Pride* and *Ambition*: And as it did spring from so unhappy a Root, so it hath ever since advanced by the same Steps, and grown up at last to an infinite Bulk.

Now

Now to remove more and more from this City of Destruction, we ought to enter upon a serious Reformation of what we have left of *Babylon's* Sins among us. But then must the Ax be laid to the Root. 'Tis not enough to lop off some of the Luxuriant Branches, whilst the *Productive* Principle of Evil is left untouched. Nor is it enough to reform the bare *Doctrine*, whilst the *Heart*, the *Life* and the *Manners* continue degenerate.

It would be too ample a Task, if I should enumerate here at large those *doctrinal* Errors which had seized the Church before the Reformation. Some whereof have been mentioned already. And it is now *Two Hundred Years* ago, when the *Doctrine* was happily restored to her former Lustre and Soundness. A Mercy that requireth our most cordial Gratitude to the undeserved Goodness of God, which thereby hath opened a more easy Access to the Knowledge of the Mysteries of Salvation. For these being loaded with a Train of humane Impositions, the Plainness of the Gospel became thereby involved in many Intricacies, and the Way to Heaven was render'd dark and difficult. The Candle is now removed from under the Bushel, and put on a Candlestick, that they who come in may see the Light. But then it is certain, that if we reform no more than the bare *Doctrine*, we do reform but *Half-way*, and scarce so much. Nay, we are in Danger of losing again what Light hath hitherto been displayed among us. The Purity of *Doctrine* restored to us, is to produce a Purity of *Life* and *Manners*, as good Seeds will bring forth Fruit, some an *hundred fold*, some *sixty-fold*, some *thirty-fold*. Without this practical Improvement, the Purity of *Doctrine* will prove but a dead Grain, let our Boasts be what they

will. * Whoever leans thereon, will lean on an Egyptian Reed, which will go into his Hand and pierce it. For he that knows the Lord's Will, and doth not do according to it, shall be beaten with many Stripes.

He that rests in a doctrinal Reformation, doth rest in a bare literal Knowledge of Truth, like the Angel of Laodicea, who, (in his own Conceit) was rich, and increased with Goods, and had need of nothing. And this Self-Conceit was so strongly riveted in his Mind, that none but Amen, the true Witness, could make him feel, that he still was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. This doctrinal Reformation, if it be not improved into Holiness of Life and Manners, doth bring a Man to a State of Lukewarmness, attended with the worst of Judgments. Such a Man is not hot, because his Knowledge is without the Power of Godliness. Nor is he altogether cold, because he possesseth a speculative and historical Knowledge of the Christian Faith. However, this unhappy Condition is not the Effect of the Labours of the first Reformers, but of the *Misapplication* People make of them. Luther himself did already complain in his Time, that the Gospel was by too many converted into Wantonness, and that the Doctrine of Faith was made a Cloak for Sin and Impiety. And at this Rate will the purest Doctrine be polluted, whenever it passeth through the unhallowed Hands of a vain and superficial Liver.

But I will mention on this Occasion several other Sorts of Reformation, which may be good and useful in their respective Spheres, though not

* Of the Insufficiency of the Reformation of the Protestant Churches, see also *Discourses and Tracts*, p. 320. seq.

sufficient for reforming Things up to their primitive Worth and Soundness. There is a Sort of *Political or Civil Reformation*, whereby the *Laws of the Land* are executed upon notorious Sinners, and open Immoralities. The *Principle* whereon this Reformation is raised, is the *Law and Constitution* of those that are placed in Authority over us, and whose Duty it is to provide wholesome Laws for the Good of the Country. And truly, several good *Effects* do result from it. Hereby the Offender's Hand is tied down from committing Violence upon his Neighbour. It helpeth to preserve the *Civil Government* in Peace and Tranquillity, and keeps many a private Family from running into their own temporal or external Destruction. It suppresses profane and enticing *Manners*, lest they should spread like a Contagion, and draw others into the same Bonds of Iniquity. Nay, the Man himself that lieth under this Curb of *Humane Laws* and Punishments, is prevented thereby from greater Dangers, to which he would be exposed, if he were suffered freely to go on in the Pursuit of his Wickedness; Sin being of so stupifying a Nature, as to make a Man insensible of his own Danger. In a Word; Those Laws are useful Means to put some Stop to the overflowing Torrent of Sin: But then ought we never to *subsist* in this Reformation, raised on *humane Laws* and Ordinances; but *improving* it into a better Temper, advance by those *Preliminary Steps* to a more *interior* Reformation of Heart and Spirit, which is the blessed Effect of the Gospel of Christ, whereof more shall be said in the Sequel of this Discourse. The Sinner, who is only restrained by the Laws of Men, ought to consider, that he is as yet widely distant from *that* Reformation which the Gospel requireth. He hath still a

great Way to go, if ever he will fully remove from *Babylon*, and obtain that *spiritual* Change of Heart, to which all other Endeavours, if wisely managed, ought constantly to tend.

Another Sort of Reformation, somewhat akin to the former, is, when a Man of a loose and debauched Conduct reformeth into *Honesty* and *Sobriety* of Manners: The *Drunkard* shakes off his former Excess, and grows temperate: The *Fornicator* quits his vile and dissolute Life, and avoids the enticing Snares of that Sin. He that is given to customary *Swearing*, restrains himself from a vain Effusion of Oaths, and keeps his Tongue under due Guard and Government. So the profane *Sabbath-Breaker* refrains from that disorderly Way, and begins to give some strict Attendance to the Publick Worship. In a Word: A Sinner stained with gross and open Pollutions, leaveth his vicious Conduct, and betaketh himself to an outward Strictness of Life. And all this he doth, not by any Compulsion of the Laws of the Land forcing him from without, but by the Strength of his own rational Consideration moving him from within. This maketh his Reformation look with a better Face than that which has been mentioned above, and which doth rather *drive* than *lead* a Sinner into some Soberness of Manners. For as he that is reformed by the Laws of Men only, will return to his old Course, as soon as the Restraint is removed; so the other, who acts on more *rational* Arguments, will often continue a long while in a serious Frame, though there be no Command to compel him.

But after all, this is but a very *imperfect* Reformation, and if it be not *improved*, or corrected by a *sublimier* Principle, will often degenerate into many spiritual Diseases; which, though they be
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not so dangerous to the *Publick*, as open Profaneness; yet will they not fail to endanger the Health of a Man's own Soul to a high Degree. A Man that forsakes his visible Pollutions, and grows externally sober and good, will be apt to deceive himself into too favourable an Opinion of his present Condition. He supposeth he sees now a vast Difference betwixt his former *Looseness*, and his present *Strictness*; betwixt his former *Baisterousness*, and his present *Soberness*; betwixt his former *Profaneness*, and his present *Righteousness*. He regards himself with a secret Applause on Account of his happy Reform, and thinks he hath no more to do than to sit down in Peace, and enjoy the Fruits of his blessed Change. When he looks upon others, and considers what a Flood of Immorality every where abounds, he *compareth* his present State with the Follies of a profane Worldling, and then unhappily concludeth he is *reformed enough*.

Alas! what a Heighth of spiritual *Conceits* doth such a Man arrive to in Time! Hereby he placeth himself on so high a Pinnacle of *Self-Complacency*, and of other such spiritual Defilements, as must needs make him very loath to come down again into the deep Vale of *Poverty in Spirit*; and yet it is this Poverty in Spirit wherein the first Foundation is laid for a sound and *spiritual* Reformation. To bring over therefore such a Reformation to the true Spirit of the Gospel, a Man ought not to acquiesce in *washing* barely the *Outside*, (Luke xi. 39.) or in *whitening* over the Wall from without, but he is to cleanse *FIRST* that which is *within the Cup*, that the *Outside may be clean also*, Matt. xxiii. 26.

Another Sort of Reformation is, when a Man reforms *partially*, or by *halves* only. He reforms away some Vices and Errors, and leaveth others *unreformed*,

unreformed, though they be perhaps of as dangerous a Tendency, as those whom he thinks fit to subdue. A Man hath now and then a natural Abhorrency against some certain Vices; and whilst he stands free and disengaged from them, he thinks he is *reformed* enough, and that a *spiritual* Change must needs be wrought on his Mind. But truly, this is but a very lame and imperfect Reformation, not at all coming up to that thorough and *searching* Work which the Gospel enjoyns. Such a Man, whilst he continueth in that unhappy Delusion, will flatter himself into a confident Dream of the good State he is in. He is unwilling to cast an Eye upon his *dark Side*, or on those Sins that are uppermost in his Thoughts, and most forward to assault him: But then he will dwell the more on that Piece of *natural* Goodness, which gives him a seeming Aversion, not against all, but a few extravagant Sins, which, perhaps, do not so well suit his bodily Temper, or that State of Life wherein he is engaged. Such a Man's Heart is *divided*, as *Israel* was of old: (*Hos.* x. 2.) And whilst he abstaineth from one Sin, he indulgeth the more another, to which his natural Temper doth more feelingly prompt him.

Some Pagan Philosophers have proved most visible Instances of such a *partial* Reformation. They had now and then extraordinary Flights about *Mortification*, *Retiredness* from the World, and the like refined *Moralities*, whereby they struck Wonder into others, and in a manner *deified* their Actions in the Eye of the Vulgar. And many even to this Day, are taken so much with heathenish *Morals*, that they admire a Saying of a Pagan Philosopher far more, than the plain Sentences of the Gospel of Christ; which being
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attended with an inward Energy, doth not stand in need of those shining Embellishments wherewith the Heathen is wont to set off his *Morals*. But after a narrow Search it will soon be found out that all the Buffle the Heathen maketh with his Virtues, is but a *partial* Work, by which he indeed subdueth one Sin, but giveth Way to another of a more refined, but no less pernicious Nature. This Consideration should endear unto us the Christian Constitution, which doth not so much reform the sinful Actions of Men, as the *Heart* and *Nature* from whence they proceed.

There is another Sort of Reforming, which may be termed an *Ecclesiastical* Reformation, and doth chiefly dwell upon the *Scheme* and *external Form* of the Church and Publick Worship. Almost every Party in *Christendom* pretends to a *primitive* Form of Worship, and they do what lieth in them, to make others espouse it. They are generally more zealous to propagate their peculiar Form, than the Spirit and Power of the Christian Religion; though without this, the best Form will do no great Good in the Church. Those that busy themselves most about this Sort of Reforming, are the *Learned*; many whereof spend the whole of their Time and Studies in laborious Searches after the *primitive* Constitution. They go with unwearied Application through the Writings of the Fathers, they enquire into Councils, they consult a Variety of Books of Controversie writ on that Head, and do what they can, to trace Things up to their first Source and Original.

But after all these painful Enquiries, whereby they suppose to retrieve Things into their ancient Lustre, there is still a great Deal wanting, and
vast

vast *Improvements* must be made, if ever the Church shall in any Degree be reformed into her primitive Soundness. If a primitive *Scheme* and Model, in all its Parts and Dimensions, had been fully set forth by the Apostles, and handed down to us from the first Times of the Gospel; yet would all this prove no more than a *Pattern* to follow after in raising that House, to which the Church is so frequently compared. Thus when the Lord had under the Law shewn the *Form* of the Ark and Tabernacle unto his Servant *Moses*, he adds: *Look that thou make them after the Pattern, which was shewed thee in the Mount.* The making Work, the building, the raising, the improving doth then but begin, after the Builders have agreed upon a Plan to frame the Building by. Upon the whole, 'tis certain, it would be a very dangerous Rest, if ever any Body should offer to acquiesce in a Pattern of Reformation, and think the Church was reformed enough, after he had contrived a Scheme to reform her by.

But we come now to a better Sort of Reformation, than all those several Kinds we have hitherto viewed, and whereby we begin to remove in some Degree from the great *Babylon*, that Cage of every unclean and hateful Bird. This we may call a *legal* Reformation. It hath something in it of a divine Operation, and sets the Reformation nearer home than all the preceding Efforts ever could do. When I call it a *legal* Reformation, or a Work carried on by the *Law*, I don't understand such Laws as are enacted by Princes and Governours for the Good of the Land. For though even those Laws carry a Sort of Reformation with them, tending to the Suppression of ill and dangerous Customs; yet
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are they so far from working a *spiritual* Reformation, that they cannot produce in the Soul so much as *one Breath* of a truly *spiritual* Life of Grace. And yet are they good and useful in that Sphere where they are designed to move.

Nay, the Law of God himself, though it be in its Nature altogether *spiritual*, cannot now work a spiritual Reformation, or, as the Apostle's Phrase is, it cannot *give Life*, Gal. iii. 21. This is a Work entirely reserved for the Dispensation of the *Gospel*, and for those divine Operations that gradually flow from it. However, there is an uninterrupted Connexion betwixt the *Law* and the *Gospel*, and the Effect that results from both, doth constantly tend to the same End, I mean, the *Recovery of a spiritual Life*, wherein true Reformation doth consist. The Law being become *weak through the Flesh*, cannot now beget a spiritual Reformation; though it shews the Want thereof: For *by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin*, Rom. iii. 20. And as the Laws of Men inflict Punishment for dissolute *Actions*; the Law of God goes deeper, and calls the very *Heart* to an Account, and all disorderly Thoughts and Desires thereof. As the Laws of Men expose the Heinousness of Sin, after it is broke out into visible Acts of Wickedness; the Law of God being of a more inquisitive Nature doth not subsist there, but layeth open the very first and original Spring, from whence all actual Pollutions do proceed.

Again: As the Laws of Men are seldom *extensive* enough to punish every Sin; the Law of God is so *exceeding broad*, that nothing can skreen it self from its impartial Scrutiny. One Time a temporal Judge will favour himself that Sin, which he should punish in others: Another Time he is unprovided with Laws to

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execute

execute upon the Transgressor: Another Time he is shy to punish a Sin, which long Time, Custom, and the Authority of great Men, has render'd current and *fashionable*. But the Law of God, wherever it works, breaks through all these *selfish* Views, and passeth an *impartial* Judgment on every Offence.

The Law of God goes to the quick, and arraigns the very Risings of the Heart, and such Motions as did not appear as sinful, or seemed altogether *innocent* in the Eye of the World. And whereas a Man that is only good and reformed *from without*, is apt to value himself on that Account; the Law, if it be but suffered to come in, will soon take off that *Self-Esteem*, and by a *spiritual* Search of all the interior Corners, stir up such a Dust of Corruption, as will render a Man very jealous of the good Opinion he had of himself, and will in Time put him to a hearty Concern about his eternal Salvation. Not that this Sin was not there before, but because it was not stirred up. It did lie concealed from the Eye of Men; and the Sinner not perceiving the Brink of Destruction, whereon he was placed, did run on headlong in the Pursuit of his Lust and Vanity. But by the Law doth Sin now *revive*, and become exceeding *sinful*. The Reason whereof is, that the Law being of a *spiritual* and piercing Nature, cannot bear the least Grain of Corruption, but will have it entirely removed. Nor doth it suffer a Man to rest in a bare *moral Strictness* or *civil* Righteousness, but will have him renewed in *Spirit, Soul, and Body*, and thoroughly restored to the Image of God, forfeited by the first Transgression.

And what shall a Man do under this awakened Sense of Sin and Conscience? Certainly the
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Wrath of God, wherewith he is so lively struck, will beget in him an unfeigned *Desire* after a Redeemer. He will pant after the Favour of God, of which he now feels the Want: And in order to the obtaining thereof, he will renounce Sin, which hath made him from a Friend an Enemy, and from a loyal Subject a flat Rebel against his Sovereign. He will not only forsake the external Acts of Impiety, on which the very Laws of Men put a Restraint; but being now under the Hands of a *spiritual* Law, and feeling that this Law requires a *spiritual* Obedience, and an *inward* Reformation of the very Source of Evil; he approaches now in true Brokenness of Heart *JESUS CHRIST* himself, in whom a *Fountain is opened for Sin and Uncleanness*. By Him, and by Him alone, he is restored both to a Newness of Life, and then to God's Favour and Kindness. The Sinner begins now to be *ashamed* of his former dissolute Life; he is *confounded*, and can hardly open his Mouth; he *loatheth* himself for his former Abominations, and conceives a holy *Indignation* against his own Vileness. And don't you think, that this restless Sense, wrought in a Man by this *legal* Operation, is a noble Step towards a true *Gospel-State*, which, after all preceeding Endeavours, must put the Crown and Topstone to the grand Work of Reforming; and bring every Duty into its true Extent and *Evangelical* Compass. This Reformation is a *Transformation by the renewing of the Mind*, as the Scripture expresses it, *Rom. xii. 2*.

The Principle whereon this *Gospel-Reformation* is raised, and whereby it is carried on, is the *GRACE* of God manifested in the Gospel. This Grace is a supernatural Gift, and is come by *Jesus*

Christ, as the Law was given by Moses, Jo. i. 17. As Man hath it not by Nature, so it did appear to him (Tit. ii. 11.) in Christ, after it was forfeited in Adam.

But to set this Matter in a fuller Light, we must observe, that the Word *GRACE* hath divers Significations in Scripture, and must be applied accordingly. It relates now and then to the *Justification* of a Sinner, and now and then to the *Sanctification*, which succeeds it. As for his Justification, it is certain, there is nothing on God's Side to justify a Man, but *Grace*. For we are *freely justified and saved by his Grace*, Rom. iii. 24. Eph. ii. 5. And then the Word *Grace* intimates to us that infinite *Love* wherewith God hath so loved the World, that he gave his Son for it, Jo. iii. 16. This *Grace* is also called the *tender Mercy of God*, Luke i. 78. Likewise his *Kindness* and *Love*, opposed to the Works of Righteousness, which are not able to save us, Tit. iii. 4.

And who must not own, that this *DIVINE LOVE* is the very original Source and Basis of our whole Salvation, and of the Reformation of our Lives, which must needs preceed it? From this divine *Love towards us*, do issue forth, as from the *Fountain-head*, all the Operations tending to *reform* us, to restore, to regenerate, and at last to save us. The very *Incarnation* of the Son of God, and his *Mission* into the World to reform it, is the happy Effect of this Love. Upon the whole: The very first Motion to restore fall'n Man, did spring in the Heart of God, and was manifested in Christ, when the Fulness of Time came. This is certainly a Matter of infinite Comfort. For the Hope of our Salvation being not raised on our Love to God, but on his Love to us, then our Hope is
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as firm as God himself is, and we have an unshaken Foundation to rely upon, in the grand Work of our eternal Happiness.

This Grace, whereby we are *justified* without any Regard to our Works, is attended again with another called *sanctifying* Grace. As the former is *freely* conferred upon us, so the latter teacheth us to *improve* what we so freely received. As the former sets forth what *CHRIST* hath done *for us*; so the latter declareth what he is to do *within us*: That he is to destroy here the Works of the Devil, and to set up the Works of God: That he is to pull down the strong Holds of Satan, and to establish the pure Kingdom of God: That he is here to dwell himself by Faith, and to cast out all the old Inhabitants, who have profaned his Temple: That here he is to take away the stony Heart, and to put a Heart of Flesh within us. And can we suppose, that when Christ begins to dwell in the Heart by Faith, his Spirit can at the same Time be absent? No sure! The Spirit of Christ is there, where Christ himself is: And where the Spirit is, there he operateth all those blessed Effects that are ascribed to him in Scripture. There he *reproveth* and *teacheth*, there he *leadeth* and *crieth*, there he *witnesseth* and *helpeth*, there he *enlighteneth* and *regenerateth*. And should not all this produce at last a truly *spiritual and Gospel-Reformation*, the Flower and Crown into which all our reforming Endeavours ought to be *improved*? 'Tis true, this is a great Work, but nothing is too great for God, by whose Strength *Babylon* within and without us *shall be* destroyed and judged. And 'tis then we shall celebrate an everlasting Jubilee.

All other Reformations we have mentioned, are but so many *preparatory* Steps preceeding this grand

grand Work. All the inferior Dispensations ought to *center* in this at last, if else they shall leave a saving Change in the Heart, and rescue a Sinner from eternal Ruin. It is true, we must not despise the *Day of small Things*, nor undervalue any Design which in any Degree may tend to reform a degenerate World: But then we ought not to rest there neither, but to press more forward towards that great *Gospel-Design*, I mean an *inward Holiness of Life*, to which all other Efforts ought constantly to aim. The *legal Reformation* doth, like a Plough, break open the fallow Ground; but then doth the *Gospel-Dispensation* sow it over with the Seed of the Word, to render it fruitful. The Law lays open the inward Sores; but the Gospel binds 'em up and heals 'em. When the Apostle says: *UNTIL the Time of Reformation*, Heb. ix. 10. He seems to intimate, that such Efforts as *precede* the Ministration of the Gospel, are Steps towards a Reformation, rather than the Reformation it self.

My Beloved! Let us endeavour after this *Gospel-Reformation*, and when we have obtained it in some Degree, let us raise all our Virtues thereon, as on their true and genuine *Basis*. But then it is not to be done by Fits and Starts, but by *Degrees*. For as this Reformation comes from Heaven, so it doth *gradually* spring up again *unto Life everlasting*, whence it did proceed. Our Spots are of so deep a Dye, that nothing will take them off but the Gospel of Christ, which is a *Power of God unto Salvation*. And though we should *wash our selves with Nitre*, and take much Soap, yet is our Iniquity still marked before the Lord, Jer. ii. 22. But if ever this Gospel, which is a Word of Salvation, shall have a saving Effect upon us, we must then not be wanting on our Side. If ever it shall beget an inward Life, and nourish it,

it, it must be inwardly digested: If it shall bring Healing in its Wings, we must yield to its Operation; it being impossible for the best Medicine to heal, whilst the obstinate Patient doth wilfully reject it. If the Gospel shall enrich us with heavenly Graces, we must approach it in true Poverty of Spirit. If it shall save us, we must feel our own Condemnation. In a Word: If the Gospel shall be profitable to us, it must be *mixed with Faith*, in order to work a saving Reformation in *Spirit, Soul, and Body*; and render every Thing conformable to the divine Will. This will prove at last a full Departure from the *great Babylon*, to which a real Beginning hath been made by the first Reformers.

This blessed *Gospel-Reformation* will be followed by a Train of many other heavenly Graces. It will inspire the Soul with a *reciprocal Love* to God, and with Charity to all those whom he hath appointed as proper Objects of our Compassion. It will get the Conquest in Time over all *Rancour, Hatred, and Malice*, so opposite to the Gospel of Christ; and it will influence Mankind with mutual Love and Forbearance. This will needs be followed with a sincere *Union*, not so much of *Rites and Ceremonies*, as of *Hearts and Souls*; which was the distinguishing Character, that in the Christians of the first Ages of the Gospel did so conspicuously appear. This Reformation having first made us like to our Saviour in Holiness here, will also make us like unto him in Glory hereafter: But then *every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself as Christ is pure*: To whom with the *Father and the Holy Spirit*, be all *Praise, Majesty, and Dominion, both now and for ever. Amen.*

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